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上
暁 佳奈
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Table Of Contents

1. Violet Evergarden: Chapter 1 (Part 1)
2. Violet Evergarden Chapter 1 (Part 2)

Violet Evergarden: Chapter 1 (Part 1)

So, KyoAni put up the first chapter of the Violet novel for free on the official site (part 1 || part 2), and I didn't see anyone translating it, so I took the liberty to do so myself. Counting with proofreading from the wonderful @harukazenoetranger. Any corrections are very welcome! Now, without futher ado:

'Auto-Memories Doll'. It has been a long time since such name was popularized.

The creator was the researcher of mechanical dolls, Dr. Orlando. His wife, Molly, was a novelist, and it all started when she lost her sight. Once she had become blind, Molly was extremely depressed that she could not write novels – something she had done for the majority of her life – and had grown weaker as the days passed. Unable to bear seeing his wife in that state, Dr. Orlando built the first Auto-Memories Doll. It was meant for registering everything said by a human voice – in other words, a machine that served as a 'secretary'.

Although he had only meant to make one for his beloved wife, it later became well-known with the support of a great amount of people. Currently, Auto-Memories Dolls were being sold at a reasonably low price, and there were types that could be rented or borrowed.

The Playwright and the Auto-Memories Doll

Roswell was a beautiful bucolic capital surrounded by greenery. A city located at the foot of a mountain, surrounded by several high others. Its whole territory was something to be contemplated. However, amongst influential people, Roswell was known for its summerhouses – or, in other words, its holiday's villas.

In spring, the mountains and rivers overflowing with flowers entertained people's eyes. In summer, many sought the biggest waterfall, which was a touristic point, to learn about local history. In autumn, everyone's hearts were struck by the rain of decaying leaves. In winter, the whole scenery was enveloped into silent tranquility. As the transition of the four seasons was very easily distinguishable, it was a land that had more than enough to offer for pleasing the people who visited during the change of periods for sightseeing.

Many villas had been built connected to the mountain-foot city, which consisted of wooden cottages painted in many colors. From the smallest to the biggest lots, the cost of land in the area was quite a large sum, and therefore, having a villa be made there was a proof of wealth in itself.

The city was cramped with shops for tourists. On holidays, the main street interconnected to said shops would be crowded, pleasant tunes playing in the background. With such assortment, no one could make fun of the place, even with it being the countryside. People would usually build villas in the city for the sake of convenience, and anyone who built them anywhere else was viewed as an oddball.

The current season was an autumn of drifting clouds in a tall-looking sky. Away from the mountain foot, located near a lake that was not highly regarded as a sightseeing point, there was a single cottage.

It was a traditional-style house with remarkable traits, as though to express it belonged to a profitable person. But as if it also belonged to an uncaring person, it was in poor condition, with an aspect of abandonment. Beyond the arch-

shaped gate colored in washed-out white paint, a garden filled with weeds and nameless flowers could be found, as well as a rotting red brick wall that did not seem like it would be repaired. Roof tiles cracked here and there, looking like they used to be perfectly aligned in the past but had been cruelly pared. Next to the house's entrance was a swing covered in entangled ivies, seemingly no longer movable. It was a cue there used to be children around, as well as a cue that there were not anymore.

The house's proprietary was a middle-aged man named Oscar. With said name, he had maintained a career in the writing industry as a playwright. He was a redhead of many habits who wore heavy-lensed, black-rimmed glasses. He was child-faced and a little bent forward, which made him look younger than he really was, and always wore a sweater, as he was sensitive to cold. A completely normal man that did not hint he could become a protagonist in any sort of story.

The house was not Oscar's villa; it had been built with the genuine desire to spend his life in that place. Not him alone, but also his wife and young daughter. It had enough space for the three of them, yet there was no one other than Oscar living there. The other two had long passed away.

The cause of Oscar's wife's death had been illness. Its name was too lengthy, to the point one would give up trying to pronounce it. To put it bluntly, it was the rapid clotting of blood vessels and death by clogging. Moreover, it was hereditary, and his wife had inherited it from her father. As she had become an orphan due to the high mortality rate in her family, he had only come to find out the harsh truth regarding his wife, who had been lonely from her lack of relatives, after she had died.

"She was scared that, if you'd known, you might have not wanted to marry a sick woman, so she kept it a secret."

The one who had told him so had been her best friend. At her funeral, from the moment he had received such revelation from her, one question had constantly echoed in Oscar's head.

"Why? Why? Why?"

If she had told him beforehand, no matter how much it cost, together, they could have searched for a cure. They could have spent any amount of the extra

money they had in their piled-up savings, regardless of the expenses.

It was glaringly obvious that Oscar's wife had not married him for gold-digging. He had first met her before becoming a playwright, and their meetings took place in the library he frequently visited, while the one who had first noticed her – the former librarian – had been Oscar himself.

——I thought she was… a beautiful person. The corner of new books she was in charge of was always interesting. While I fell in love with those books, I also fell in love with her.

"Why?" was repeated several hundreds of million times. Anything else had disappeared from his mind.

His wife's best friend was an auspicious person, and while he had lost his heart with the death of his wife, she energetically took care of him and his small daughter. She would prepare hot meals for Oscar, who would forget to eat all day if left alone, and braid the hair of the little girl who cried and mourned the absence of the mother that used to do so.

Perhaps there had been a bit of one-sided love involved. One time, when he was in bed with a high fever, the one who had taken his repeatedly vomiting daughter to the hospital had been her. The one who had found out first that the girl had the same disease as her mother had not been the father, but the mother's best friend.

What had happened afterwards had progressed slowly, but in Oscar's eyes, it could not have been faster. They had relied only on famous and unmatched doctors, unlike when his wife had gone through the same hardship. From one big hospital to the other, they bowed their heads to many people, asking for help and gathering information for testing a new drug.

Medicines and side effects were two sides of the same coin. His daughter would cry every time she took them. As he could not take his eyes off the suffering of his loved one, his nursing days gnawed his already corroded heart even more.

No matter what kind of new remedies they tried, his daughter's situation did not become better. In the end, out of resources, the medics gave up and declared her as incurable.

“I wonder if my wife is feeling forlorn after being beckoned to the underworld…” he wondered about that and similar idiotic things over and over eventually. *“Please don’t take her with you.”* he supplicated in front of her grave, but the dead do not have mouths to reply.

Oscar was mentally exhausted, but the one who broke down first had been his wife’s best friend, who had followed them through the many hospitals until then. Overwrought from taking care of his unstable daughter, she gradually distanced herself from the hospital until, finally, Oscar and his daughter were truly all alone.

Thanks to a daily routine of many prescriptions, his daughter’s cheeks, which had previously resembled rose petals over white milk, had become yellow and hideously puny. Her hair that used to smell sweet and look like honey had quickly fallen off.

He… could not bear to see her. It was truly a figure he could not endure staring at.

At last, Oscar had a futile argument with one of the doctors, so that his daughter would have to take nothing but painkillers. He did not wish for the rest of her short life to be engrossed in affliction.

From then on was a little bit of peace. Easygoing days. Seeing his daughter’s smile for the first time in a while. Remnants of their fortunate days continued after that.

The weather had been wonderful the day she passed away – an autumn that brought out the color of everything around. The sky had been clear. Red and yellow-dyed trees could be seen from the hospital’s windows.

In the hospital’s premises, there was a fountain that looked like an oasis, and on its water’s surface, the leaves fallen from the surroundings quietly floated. Upon falling, they drifted and fluctuated on the water, gathering as though they had been pulled by a magnet. His daughter had said that was ‘pretty’.

“The yellow of the leaves mixing with the blue of the water is very pretty. Hey, could I walk on them without falling?”

Such a child-like idea. It was a clear that the leaves would soon lose to gravity

and her weight and sink. Still, Oscar did not voice that.

"If you had an umbrella, you could use the wind and the chances of managing that would increase, huh?" He had jokingly answered, wanting to spoil that child who could not be saved, even if just slightly.

Hearing that, his daughter had laughed with glowing eyes.

"You'll show it to me someday, right? In that lake close to our house, when the leaves that fall in autumn gather together on the water surface."

Someday.

Someday, she would show him.

After that, his daughter, upon having a coughing fit, suddenly died.

As he had embraced her lifeless body, he realized how light it was. Even for a corpse that no longer had a soul, it had been too light. Had she really ever been alive or had he merely been having a long dream, Oscar had asked himself as he shed tears.

He had buried his daughter in the same cemetery as his wife, returning to the place where the three of them had once lived together and resumed his life quietly. Oscar had economic power enough to live without anything affecting him, as the scripts he wrote were used everywhere, so the savings accumulated from his payments made it impossible for him to die from starvation.

After years of mourning for his daughter and wife, he was approached by a colleague of his former job, who had asked him if he could write a screenplay again. For Oscar, who had only had his name left in the industry and his existence itself erased from it, a request from a theatre group that everyone admired was an honor.

Lazy, dissolute, grief-indulged days. Humans are creatures that become tired easily of being sad or happy, and cannot continue either way forever. That is their nature.

Oscar had accepted the offer with an immediate feedback, deciding to hold onto a pen once more. However, from then was when his problem had started.

For the sake of escaping from the ugly reality, Oscar had started drinking. It

had also served as a medicine for being able to have good dreams. Thanks to the assistance of a doctor, he had been able to overcome the alcohol and drugs, but was left with a tremor in his hand. Whether he wrote on paper or with a typewriter, he simply could not properly progress.

The desire to write, however, remained in his chest. All he had to do was find a means to put it into words.

As he asked for advice from the old work colleague that had made him the request, the latter had told him, “There’s something that could work. You should use an Auto-Memories Doll.”

“What’s that?”

“You’re so disconnected from the world… no, more like your reclusion from it is of a worrisome level. They’re famous. Nowadays, you can rent them for a relatively low price. That’s right, you should order one.”

“A doll… could help me?”

“They’re special secretaries.”

Oscar had then decided to use the tool which name he had only just memorized. That is, an ‘Auto-Memories Doll’. His encounter with her started from there.

A woman climbed the mountain road. Her soft, braided hair was held by a dark red ribbon, while her thin body was wrapped in a snow-white ribbon-tie dress. Her silk pleats skirt swayed neatly as she walked, the emerald brooch on her chest glittered in sparkles. The jacket she wore over the dress was of a contrasting Prussian blue. Her long leather boots, included for practicality, were of a deep cocoa brown.

Holding a heavy-looking trolley bag, she made her way through Oscar’s house’s white arch gate. Right by the moment she stepped into the house’s front yard, a gust of autumn wind blew by noisily. Red, yellow and brown decayed leaves danced around her where she stood.

Perhaps because of the curtain of autumn leaves, her field of vision was momentarily clouded. The woman then firmly gripped the brooch on her chest. She muttered something in a low voice – lower than the fluttering sound of the

rain of leaves, which melted into the air without anyone being able to hear.

As the mischievous wind calmed down, the woman's cautious atmosphere was gone, and without any hesitation, she pressed the house's buzzer with a finger protected by a black glove. The groaning buzzer resounded like a scream from the depths of hell, and after a short while, the door was opened. The house's owner, the redhead Oscar, showed his face. He wore messy garments in front of the guest, as if he had either just woken up or not slept at all.

As Oscar looked at the woman, he was slightly perplexed. Was it because she had such a whimsical get-up? Or was it because she was too stunning? Whichever it was, he had to take a deep breath.

"Are you… the Auto-Memories Doll?"

"Precisely. I rush anywhere to provide service for a client. I'm the Auto-Memories Doll Violet Evergarden." The blonde, blue-eyed woman who possessed a beauty that seemed to have come straight out of a fairytale answered in monotone, without putting on a fake smile.

The woman named Violet Evergarden was a figure as reticent and charming as an ordinary doll. Her blue orbs partially covered by golden locks shone like the ocean, with cherry blossom pink-tinted cheeks over milky-white skin and glossy, lustrous rouge-dyed lips. A woman with a fairness akin to the full moon, not lacking in anything. Were it not for her blinking, she could easily become an artifact in some gallery.

Oscar had absolutely no knowledge regarding the Auto-Memories Dolls, and so had asked his old work colleague to arrange one for him.

"She'll be sent there within a few days." Was what he had been told, and after he did his waiting, he was visited by her.

——I was sure I was going to receive from the mailman a box containing a small, robotic-like doll. To think it would be an android so similar to a human… Just how much has civilization improved ever since I've secluded myself here?

Oscar only kept in distant touch with the rest of the world. He did not read newspapers or magazines and rarely hung out with anyone. Other than friends of his, the only people he would have contact with were the cashier at the

grocery store and the deliveryman that occasionally brought him packages.

He soon regretted not looking for information and arranging everything himself. To have something that resembled a person in that house once meant for three felt extremely incongruous and somehow brought back a bitter aftertaste.

——It feels like I'm doing something terrible to my family…

Without trying to understand Oscar's thinking, Violet sat on the expansive couch of the living room she had been directed to. Upon being offered black tea, she drank all of it neatly, which seemed to point that the current machines had developed splendidly.

"What happens to the black tea you drank?"

Feeling herself being questioned, Violet tilted her head a little. "It will eventually be discharged from my body… and return to the earth?" she replied. It was a very machine doll-like answer.

"Honestly… I'm shocked. Hum, you're a bit different… from what I had imagined."

Violet examined her own appearance with a glance, and then looked back at Oscar, who stared at her without sitting on the adjacent chair.

"Would there have been any extra credits in case I was in accordance with your hopes?"

"No… it's not exactly 'hopes'…"

"If Master would not mind waiting, I could ask the Company to send another doll."

"That's not what I meant… no, forget it. As long as you can work, it's fine. You don't seem like the loud type."

"If you wish, I could also breathe more quietly."

"You don't have… to do that much."

"I've come here to be Master's assistant. I shall work to please you so that I will not stain the name of Auto-Memories Dolls. I don't mind whether the tools I

have at my disposition are pen and paper or a typewriter. Please, use me as you will."

As she said so with her huge gem-like blue eyes staring at him intensely, Oscar's heart raced a little, and he nodded with an "okay".

The period she had been rented for was two weeks. In that meantime, they had to finish a story no matter what. Oscar renewed his will, taking her to his study and planning to start working immediately. Yet, as things turned out, what Violet ended up doing first was not writing, but cleaning up the room.

The study that was also a bedroom had Oscar's previously worn clothes and a pan with leftovers from his last meal all over the floor in a disastrous fashion. Simply put, there had been no space for even one foot to step inside.

Violet gazed at him with her big pupils. "You called me here with the place in this condition?" her eyes seemed to say.

"I'm sorry…"

It was clear that it was not a room someone would work in. Ever since he became alone, he had not used the living room, which was why it was still clean, but the bedroom he frequently entered and exited, the kitchen and the bathroom were in atrocious state.

Oscar thought he was glad Violet was a mechanical doll. Her body age seemed to be from someone in her 10's to her mid-20's; he did not wish to show something so embarrassing to a real woman that young. Even though he was getting old, for a man, it was just deplorable.

"Master, I'm a secretary, not a maid." She said as she contradictorily pulled out of her bag a white frilly apron, willingly proceeding to tidy everything up.

The first day was over just like that.

On the second day, the two of them sat in the study and started their work. Oscar lay on his bed while Violet sat on a chair and used the typewriter on the desk.

"She… said:" as Oscar dictated, a blind touch silently wrote down each letter with terrifying speed. He observed, thoroughly surprised. "Pretty… fast, huh."

Upon being complimented, Violet removed one of the black gloves that went up to her sleeves and showed one of her arms. It was metallic. The fingers seemed to be even stiffer and more robotic-like than the other parts.

“I’m employed by a brand that sells practicality. These are the standards of Esterk Company, so my levels of endurance are high, and it’s possible to make moves and use physical force that a human body normally would not be able to, which is very fascinating. I can register any word Master says without omissions.”

“Is that so? Ah, hey, you don’t have to write what I just said, only the words meant for the script.”

Oscar continued to dictate. In the process, they took many breaks, but things went well for the first day. After all, the story’s concept had only been stored within him, and he had not been able to record it anywhere.

As Oscar spoke, he realized that Violet was great as a story listener and secretary. She had given off an impression of serenity from the start, and during work, that was even more apparent. Even though he had not requested it, he really could not hear her breathing, only the clacking of the typewriter. If he averted his eyes, he had the impression the typewriter was typing all by itself. Whenever he asked until what point she had written, she would read it to him, her tempered voice and good reciting something fun to listen to. If she was the narrator, anything sounded like a solemn fictional story.

——I see, of course these would become popular.

Oscar was able to keenly witness the greatness of Auto-Memories Dolls. However, although things had gone smoothly until the third day, from the fourth day on, there was a period of writer’s block. It was something common amongst writers. There are times where the contents to be written down are already thought of, but the right words to put them in are not.

From his many years of experience, Oscar had a method to cope with when he could not write. That is, to avoid writing. He had the fact that nothing he forced himself to write would come off good enough internalized within himself.

He felt bad for Violet, but had to leave her in waiting. For the sake of not making her sit idly, he asked her do the cleaning, laundry and cooking. Naturally,

she was powered by the spontaneous disposition of a hardworker.

It had been a long time since he had eaten a steamy warm meal made by someone else. He did order from delivery services and ate out, but the meals he had cooked for himself due to being busy from work were different from those.

An omelet rice's egg coat that melted creamily into his mouth. A tofu hamburger recipe from the East. A top-notch pilaf of colorful vegetables over rice mixed in a spicy sauce. A gratin with seafood that was hard to find in a land surrounded by mountains. As side dishes, there would always be salads and soups he would always ask what had been made of. He was a little moved by all of that.

While Oscar ate, Violet only watched, without tasting any of it. She would not budge as the mealtime went on, saying she would eat later.

It was confirmed that she could ingest liquids, but it could be that she could not eat anything solid. If that was so, what if she drank oil while he was not looking? As he tried to picture it, a surreal image came to his mind.

——There would still be no problem… if we ate together.

He wished so in his thoughts, without saying it aloud.

She was completely different from his wife, but something in the figure of her back as she cooked brought a familiar feeling. As he observed her, for some reason, he was assaulted by excessive sadness and the corners of his eyes felt hot. With that, he came to understand awfully well how it was to let an outsider into his routine.

——Meaning… the lifestyle I have right now is really lonely.

The elation of seeing Violet come back home from an errand. The relief of knowing he was not alone as he felt himself falling asleep at night. The fact that she would be there when he opened his eyes again, even without doing anything. All of it made Oscar become aware of how much of a solitary person he was.

He had money and no economic troubles in his life. However, that was nothing more than a psychological shield to sugarcoat reality and prevent his heart from hardening even more. It was not guaranteed to cure any wounds. To have

someone whom he knew nothing of other than her temperament so close, to be there beside him the same way he had left her as he woke up, pierced through the once-shut heart of Oscar, who had been alone all this time.

Violet coming into his life had been like ripples on water. A small change in a still lake. The only things caught in such flow are insignificant pebbles, but for a life as tasteless as his, it had been like a great change for a wind-less lake.

Was it a good or bad change? If he were to decide, he would say it had been good. At least, the tears overflowing from the sorrow he felt when she was around were much warmer than any he had shed so far.

Next >>

Violet Evergarden Chapter 1 (Part 2)

Continuing from the translation of part 1 here. Raws here and here.

I must admit I was not expecting what happened at the ending of this chapter.

After three more days of his time with Violet went by, Oscar got on his feet again. What he had gained inspiration for had been a specific scene.

The story Oscar was having Violet write was about the adventures of a lone girl. Said girl, who had left home, visited many lands, came in contact with many people and witnessed many occurrences, thus growing up. The girl's motif was his diseased daughter.

At the end of it all, the girl returned to the home she had parted from. Her father had awaited her there, and could not tell if it was really her, as she had changed so much. The sad girl begged him to remember, reminding him of a promise they had exchanged in the past – to try crossing the lake close to their house by walking on the decayed leaves that fell on the water.

“Humans can’t walk on water.”

“I just want the image. I’ll make the girl be assisted by the blessing she had earned from a water spirit in the middle of her adventure.”

“Even so, I’m not cut for this. The girl from the story is vivacious and charmingly innocent. That’s unlike everything I am.” The Auto-Memories Doll argued.

Oscar had Violet put on clothes that imitated his main character and asked her if she could play around a little at the lakeshore. He had already made her do cleaning, laundry and other house chores, and on top of it, asked for such a favor. It was as if she was a factotum.

Even as Violet was a percipient professional woman, she mused in surprise, “What a troublesome person…”

“Your hair color… may be a little different, but it’s blond, just like my daughter was. If you put on a one-piece, surely…”

“Master, I am but a secretary. An Auto-Memories Doll. I’m not your wife or concubine. Nor can I become a replacement.”

“I-I know that. I wouldn’t have that kind of interest in a girl like you. It’s just… your appearance… if my daughter was alive, I think… she’d have grown into someone sort of like that.”

Violet’s firm rejection crumbled at that.

“I really did think you were being too stubborn… so your young lady has passed away?” she bit her lip lightly. Her face seemed to show her conscience was conflicted.

During these few days, Oscar had become able to understand one thing about her. That is, how Violet would stick to what was considered ‘righteous’ when she was torn between good or bad things.

“I’m an Auto-Memories Doll… I want to grant my clients’ wishes… but this one violates my work regulations…”

She behaved as if she was inwardly wrestling with herself, and although Oscar felt bad for it, he tried one last time. “If you could build the image of the girl as a

grown-up, coming back home, ready to fulfill her promise, my will to write will soon be revived. It's true. If you want a reward, I can give anything. I can pay double your original price. This story is really precious to me. I want to finish writing it, and make it my life's milestone. Please."

"But… I… am not a dress-up doll…"

"Then I won't take photos or anything of the sort."

"You had intended to?"

"I'll burn it into my memory, and write the story with just that. Please."

Violet thought it over a little more with a sullen face after that, and wound up complying, losing to Oscar's persistence. She could be the type that became weak when pressured.

Oscar then left behind his life of confinement, went out on his own and bought fancy clothes and an umbrella for Violet. The outfit was a white lace blouse and a ribbon belt over a blue one-piece. The umbrella was cyan and white-stripped, abundant in frills. Violet seemed interested in it, spinning it around after repeatedly opening and closing it.

"Is the umbrella weird?"

"It's my first time seeing such a cute umbrella."

"Aren't you wearing cute clothes yourself? Do they not match your tastes?"

"We wear what the superiors of the Company suggest us to. I myself don't visit fashion stores very often."

It was like a child dressing up as her mother told her.

——It could be… that she's far younger than even she herself thinks.

Thinking like that, she faintly resembled a little girl, regardless of her adult-like design.

While Violet still had not changed her mind, once Oscar was done shopping, he wasted no time in asking her to get changed.

It was late afternoon, a bit cloudy outside. It did not seem like it would rain, but the atmosphere implied so. The chilly air that brought the feeling that

autumn was coming was not yet cold enough to prod into one's skin.

Oscar was the one to go out first. He sat on a wooden chair in the vicinity of the lake, smoking a pipe. Because he had somewhat taken care of himself and not smoked since she had arrived, the feeling of the smoke steeping through his belly was diffused.

A few minutes of blown smoke floating in the air ensued. Then, the increasingly-worse rattling front door was opened with a creaking sound.

"Sorry for the wait."

He turned only his head at the dispassionate voice.

"You…"

'…didn't make me wait much' was what he was going to say, but the words did not come as his breath had stopped for a second. He swallowed back a gasp, as dumfounded as the first time he had seen Violet. She was too gorgeous with her hair down – a beauty that stole the moment of appreciation of everything else.

The hair that had once been braided was leniently spread and slightly curled at the ends. It was fairly longer than he had imagined. And, most important of all…

——If… my daughter had been able to grow up… she'd be like this.

Had she come to show him her dressed-up form? As he wondered about that, warmth welled in his chest.

"Master, is the image of me wearing the clothes you gave me good enough?" In the midst of the world of autumn colors, the girl of inhuman beauty grabbed her skirt and tried spinning around once.

Originally posted by yuno-chi

"With this, I just have to model as though I was crossing that lake, right? Eh, but Master, is this really the kind of setting you wanted to write? Rather than merely walking around like this, even if it's just for a few seconds, it would be better if I actually did run across the lake. Master, leave it to me. I'm specialized in physical activities, and although it's only for a little, I can follow your expectations." Violet explained as expressionless and indifferently as ever, not minding Oscar, who was overcome with many emotions at the same time and

could not come up with any reply other than ‘aah’s and ‘uuh’s.

The one standing in front of him was the total opposite of his daughter. Despite possessing the same golden hair, her pupils lacked that sweet glow.

Violet put the closed umbrella on her shoulder while gripping it tightly. She stood at a broad distance from the lake, staring at it as though examining the water surface. Dyed in the withering colors of autumn, decayed leaves were afloat on it.

The wind was unstable, blowing and stopping, blowing and stopping. Oscar worriedly observed her licking one of her mechanic fingers with the tip of her tongue, confirming said wind’s direction. As she steadily stepped backwards into the ground, she glanced at Oscar with a tiny smile.

“Worry not. Everything… shall be as Master wishes.” After assuring that with a clear voice, Violet leaped widely.

Although she had been far from him, in a second, she flew past Oscar’s eyes. That speed was like the wind itself.

Before stepping onto the lake, the swift Auto-Memories Doll firmly kicked the earth. The impact was strong enough to shake the soil. Her tough legs made real the possibility of jumping a frightening height. It looked as though she was about to climb the stairway to heaven. Oscar’s mouth was agape at the superhuman action.

From that point on, everything seemed to have happened in slow motion.

Reaching the critical point, Violet raised the umbrella she had taken with her and opened it flashily. It was like a blooming flower. The umbrella’s frills swayed beautifully, and as if predicting the perfect timing, the wind pushed her feet forward. Her skirt and umbrella bulged softly in the air, her petticoat sticking out. Her long lace-up boots gently stepped onto the decayed leaves floating on the water surface.

That one moment. That one second. That one picture. The scene as clear as a photography was engraved into Oscar’s memory. A girl with a swinging umbrella and a fluttering skirt, stepping onto the surface of a lake. Just like a sorceress.

The words of his daughter from the day her heartbeats stopped came back to

him.

‘Someday…’

“You’ll show it to me someday, right? In that lake close to our house, when the leaves that fall in autumn gather together on the water surface.”

‘Someday… I’ll show it to you someday, Dad.’

A voice… the voice from that girl whom he had ended up forgetting reverberated in his mind.

——You had no idea, did you? I wanted to continue being called by you, a hundred more times even.

“You’ll show it to me someday, right?”

‘Dad.’ a lisp, sweet voice said. *‘I’ll show it to you someday, Dad.’*

——Your voice was more comfortable to hear than anyone else’s.

‘I’ll show it to you someday.’

——Ah, that’s right. You, with that voice, would innocently entertain me. You had said that, had you not? We had a promise. I had forgotten. I had forgotten it all. For a long time, I couldn’t bring myself to remember you properly, so I’m glad we met again. Even as an illusion, I’m glad I met you. My gracious little lady. Mine, mine. My treasure shared with my most precious person. I knew… that it definitely couldn’t be fulfilled. Yet we still promised it. That promise, your death… they destroyed me, while pushing me on to keep living until now. And until now, I kept dragging myself through life. I lived messily, looking for vestiges of you. I had regretted it, but this moment… the moment where someone who isn’t you resembled you to me… was a moment, a chance meeting, an encounter, and an embrace. I had wanted to see it, thinking it would make me want to live for real again. You, whose name I can’t even whisper out of sadness. I had… wanted to see the gracious you once again, all this time. The last family member I had left. Always, always, I had constantly wanted to see you. I loved you.

He was so happy he actually wanted to smile, and yet…

“Fu… uh… uh…”

…only sobs came out. Tears flowed as though to start bringing Oscar's frozen time back to action.

"Aah… man…"

He could hear the tic-tac of a clock. It was the sound of his formerly frigid heart beating.

"I really, really…"

As he covered his face with his hands, he realized how unpleasantly creased they had become. Just for how long had his time stopped ever since those two had passed away?

"…wanted you… to not… have died…" his face was distorted as he murmured with a tearful voice, "I had wanted you to live… live and… grow up… a lot…"

——and show me how beautiful you would have become. I had wanted to see you like that. And after being able to see you in that form, I wanted to have died before you. Before you, after having been taken care of by you – I had wanted to die like this. Not having… to take care… of you. Not like that.

"I want to see you…"

Oscar's tears leaked from his eyes down his cheeks and dripped onto the ground. The sound of Violet stepping onto the lake echoed through his world of weeping. The moment of gleam was gone, and his daughter's voice that he had finally remembered was soon forgotten again. The illusion of a smiling face, too, disappeared like soap bubbles.

Oscar blocked his field of vision not only with his hands, but also with his eyes closed. He rejected the world that she no longer belonged in.

——Ah, it would be fine if I died right now. No matter how much time I spend mourning, they won't return. Heart, breathing, please stop. Ever since my wife and daughter died, I've become as good as dead. That's why, now… right now, in this very second… I want to drop dead onto the ground as if I had been shot down. Just like flowers, which can't keep breathing if their petals fall off.

He implored, but even if he made that wish several hundreds of million times, nothing would change. He, who had already wished it these several hundreds of

million times, knew it very well.

——Let me die, let me die, let me die. If the only other option is living in loneliness, let me be dead with them.

As much as he begged, nothing of it came true. Nothing came true, however…

“Master!”

In the world he neglected, he could hear the voice of a thing whose time was as stagnant as his own. With ragged breaths, it made its way towards him.

——I’m… alive.

He was still living. And, while at it, he was struggling to disappear, just as his late loved ones had. It was not a prayer that would be answered by being mustered out, but with a darkness-engulfed field of vision, where no sunlight could penetrate, he supplicated anyways.

“God, please…”

——If I’m not to die yet, at least may my daughter be happy within that story. May my daughter be satisfied with it. And by my side. May she be… by my side forever. Even if only inside the story. Even as an imaginary girl. Be by my side.

He could not help but wish so. After all, his life would go on.

In front of Oscar, who cried without caring about his age, Violet arrived, drenched in lake water. Water droplets dripped from her messy clothes, which were now ruined. Yet she had the most joyful expression, which could be considered a smile, that she had ever showed until then.

“Did you see? I was able to walk three steps.”

Without revealing that he had become unable to see through the tears, Oscar answered while inhaling with a runny nose, “Hm, I did. Thank you, Violet Evergarden.” He put his gratitude and respect into his words.

——Thank you for making it true. Thank you. It really was like a miracle.

As he said he did not think a God existed, but if it did, it was definitely her, Violet merely responded, “I’m an Auto-Memories Doll, Master.” without denying nor confirming God’s existence.

Afterwards, Oscar warmed up a bath for Violet, who was utterly soaked.

She did not show up for meals, but she did use the bathroom every day and supposedly rested in the room that had been given to her. She was a very human-like mechanic doll.

——Really, civilization is amazing nowadays. The development of science is remarkable.

Not even while being a machine girl can she be left with wet clothes. As a change of clothes was necessary, she lay a bathrobe around her supposedly perfect body and headed for the bathroom. It had been a while since anyone other than Oscar regularly used it, so in a lapse of memory, he entered it without knocking and ended up seeing her while she was had not changed yet.

“Ah, I’m sor… ry… eh?”

He swallowed his breath due to perplexity.

“EEEH?!”

What was reflected in Oscar’s eyes was a sight more bewitchingly beautiful than any naked woman. Dripping golden hair. Beautiful blue orbs of a dimension that would not soften even within a painting. The finely-shaped lips just below them. A flesh body with a slender neck, an outstanding collarbone, plump breasts, and feminine curves.

Her artificial arms consisted of metal rings from the shoulders to the fingertips. But it was only them. Despite the many scratches, other than the arms, the rest was surprisingly real skin. With that delicate body, she did not seem at all like a mechanical doll, but a relatively normal human being.

With everything he had believed in until then being mantled over by the shocking revelation, Oscar tried to confirm what he was seeing many times.

“Master.” Violet called with a voice that seemed to be judging him as he continued to ogle in astonishment.

“UAAAAAAH! UAAAAAH! UAAAAAHAAAAAH!”

Part of the outcome of that incident was Oscar’s screaming. The other was him half-crying while going beet-red, after having yelled on top of his lungs,

frantically inquiring, “Are you human, after all?!”

Wrapping a towel around herself, Violet plainly commented, “Master is, truly, a troublesome person.” Her cheeks were rose-dusted as she muttered, her face a little lowered.

‘Auto-Memories Doll’. It has been a long time since such name was popularized.

The creator was the researcher of mechanical dolls, Dr. Orlando. His wife, Molly, was a novelist, and it all started when she lost her sight. Once she had become blind, Molly was extremely depressed that she could not write novels – something she had done for the majority of her life – and had grown weaker as the days passed. Unable to bear seeing his wife in that state, Dr. Orlando built the first Auto-Memories Doll. It was meant for registering everything said by a human voice – in other words, a machine that served as a ‘secretary’.

After that, some of Molly’s works won worldwide literary prizes, and Dr. Orlando’s invention became known as necessary for the course of history. Although he had only meant to make it for his beloved wife, it later became well-known with the support of a great amount of people. Currently, Auto-Memories Dolls were being sold at a reasonably low price, and there were types that could be rented or borrowed. However, those were only secretaries that possessed similar characteristics to Auto-Memories Dolls, and were referred to with the same name.

After having bid goodbye to Violet, Oscar came to learn through his friend that she was famous in the industry. As the latter found out Oscar had primarily mistaken her for a real Auto-Memories Doll, he let out an obnoxious, amused laugh. “You sure live under a rock! Did you really think a machine so pretty could exist?”

“It’s because you had said she was a mechanical doll…”

“The technology of the present human civilization hasn’t reached that level yet. There are actual mechanical dolls, though. Some cute ones. But I just… thought she’d be a good medicine for someone like you, a shut-in who doesn’t interact with people. That girl… doesn’t talk much, but she has the power to restore people. It served the purpose, right?”

“Yeah.”

She was indeed quiet, but, yes, she was a really good girl.

“They’re no match for Violet Evergarden, but next time, for you to have a permanent assistant, I’ll send you a secretary that isn’t half-human.”

In the end, a package was delivered to Oscar’s house. It contained a small doll, completely different from Violet Evergarden. It was a mechanical doll meant for recording everything said by him with his typewriter, and would usually be sitting on his desk, clad in a lovely dress.

——I see. Definitely, this is extraordinary.

“But, it can’t compare to her…” Oscar smiled wryly, looking at the room he had lent to the girl who was no longer around. If he said he was lonely, he knew exactly how she would reply.

“Master is… such a troublesome person.” A clear voice echoed. The owner spoke expressionlessly, with only her lips curling upwards a little bit.

Even without her there, he had a feeling he could hear it.